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CHILD LABOR STATISTICS

BY FRED S. HALL,
Secretary of the Pennsylvania Child Labor Association.

Statistics have never won a child labor campaign, and they never will. But the campaigner who has no statistics is laying his cause open to discredit in the eyes of an important and increasingly influential part of our communities. Business men now wait eagerly for government crop statistics. In several cities to-day boards of trade are strenuously at work to get their suburbs annexed in order that their cities may rank high in the statistics of population to be gathered this coming summer. It is only the middle-grade man who sneers at statistics. The man of large affairs recognizes that accurate figures are essential to any important program, and such men will discount our program if we have only illustrations to offer.

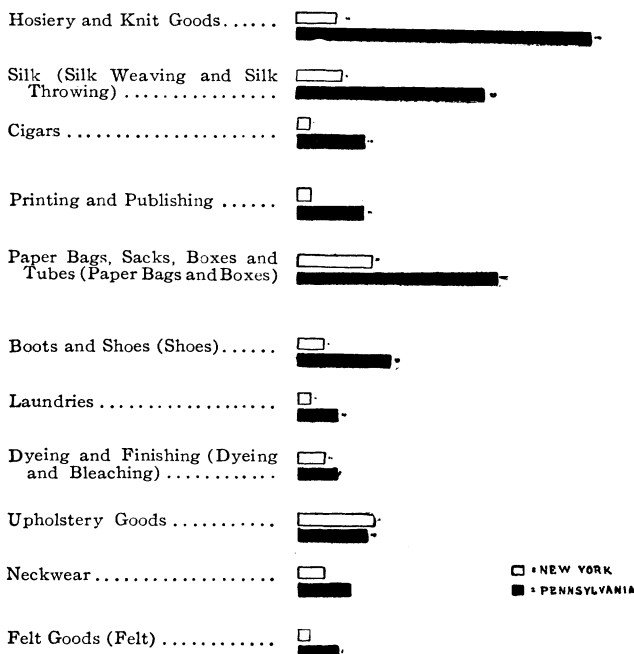
We need figures even before we begin our legislative campaign. Only by means of figures can we come to know our field—to know where investigation is most needed. Recently I had a month to investigate the local enforcement of our Pennsylvania law. I needed to know which were the thirty or more chief child labor centers in our state. No Pennsylvania statistics gave this important fact, and I was obliged to rely on the five-year-old figures gathered by the United States census. But even these demonstrated that it was worth my while to pass by the important city of Harrisburg and visit certain small boroughs south of it, where a much larger number of children were shown to be employed. The industries in those boroughs happened to be of the kind that commonly use child labor.

Similarly, if it is proposed to enact a 56, 57 or 58-hour law for women or children, it is extremely important to know how many establishments and what kind of establishments will be affected by such legislation and may, therefore, oppose it. Unfortunately, in most states no figures are collected and published on this point.

But it is when we try to arouse public opinion that figures

are most essential. A human-interest story is surest to attract general attention, but the convert most worth while discounts your story unless you can prove to him that it is not a selected case, but one of hundreds. In our last Pennsylvania campaign, we featured the coroner's verdict upon the death of a little nine-year-old boy, crushed between the jaws of a coal breaker, but we invariably displayed immediately afterward a chart showing for a coal-mining

PROPORTION OF CHILDREN IN THE LEADING CHILD LABOR INDUSTRIES OF NEW YORK AND PENNSYLVANIA



town the number of its ten-year-old children who were in school; and, in black, the number working in the breakers and mills.

In order to refute the statements of our factory inspector, that children under fourteen were not being employed, we took his own figures of employed children, all of whom he asserted were between fourteen and sixteen, and compared these, industry by industry, with the children of the same ages the New York inspector

reported for *his* state. This showing left no room for controversy. In the manufacture of hosiery, for example, Pennsylvania's child-workers, reported as between fourteen and sixteen years of age, constituted 21 per cent. of the industry, contrasted with 3 per cent., the corresponding figure in New York state. Since the same differences, only to a less extent, were true in 11 out of 12 industries which could be compared, the conclusion was unavoidable that hundreds of our 11, 12 and 13-year-old children had been recorded statistically by the Pennsylvania inspectors as being between 14 and 16 years old, thus swelling the figures for those ages abnormally. In this way, the old false affidavit evil, usually referred to only by a series of illustrations, received statistical demonstration.

Statistical Schedule

The questions relating to child labor which demand statistical answers are so numerous that we would waste our time to-day if we attempted to consider more than two or three of them. But it is worth while, in my opinion, to state in barest outline what these various questions are, as a goal for future effort. In this outline it is assumed that the figures, to be complete, should be shown separately for each industry, for each state, and for each place with a population of 5000 or over.

- (1) How many persons (males and females shown separately) are at work?
- (2) How many boys and how many girls under sixteen years of age are at work?
 - a. In industries covered by the child labor law?
 - b. In all other industries?
 - c. How many, and of what ages, work during summer vacations in both the above groups of industries?
 - d. How many establishments in each industry use no children under 16, how many less than 10 per cent. children, how many from 10 to 20 per cent. children, how many over 20 per cent. children?
- (3) What processes in each industry are performed by children?
 - a. How many engaged in each process?
 - b. What share of the time standing or walking?
- (4) What wages do children get?

- a. What wages at the age of 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20?
- b. Do those who begin at 16 catch up with and go beyond those who begin at 14?
- (5) How many hours do adult males work?
 - a. On regular weekdays?
 - b. On Saturday?
 - c. On Sunday?
 - d. In course of the whole week?
- (6) What time does work begin and end?
- (7) How many establishments use night shifts, and for what proportion of the year?
 - a. How many boys and how many girls under sixteen work on night shifts at any time during the year?
 - b. At what hours do such boys and girls begin and end their night shifts?
- (8) How many violators of the child labor law and who are they?
 - a. How many prosecuted? Who are they? For what were they prosecuted?
 - b. How many were punished, who are they, and how punished?
 - c. How many children involved in violations?
 - d. How many for under-age work?
 - For work with no certificates?
 - For working over hours?
 - For night work?
- (9) How many accidents to all classes of employees?
 - a. In what establishments?
 - b. How old was each injured person?
 - c. How serious was the accident and how did it happen?
 - d. How many hours after the beginning of work did it happen?
- (10) How many children stop school each year (public schools and parochial schools shown separately) in order to work?
 - a. How old are such children on the school records?
 - b. How far advanced in school?
- (11) How many 10-year-old, 11-year-old, 12-year-old and 13-year-old children are there in the public schools, and how many in parochial and other private schools?

- (12) How many employment certificates are issued each year?
- How many applicants are refused?
 - What kinds of proof of age are accepted and how many of each kind?
 - What grade in school has been reached by the children who receive certificates?
- (13) How many children 8 to 14 years of age are shown by the school census?
- How many of each age?
 - How many of these found by a check-up with the enrollment books of public and parochial and other private schools to be attending some school?
 - How many attending no school?
 - How many of the latter accounted for as
 - Receiving satisfactory training at home?
 - Physically or mentally unable to attend school?
 - At work?
- (14) How many children found at work by truant officers and put into school?
- How many visits made by truant officers to places of employment?
 - How many parents prosecuted under the compulsory education law, how many punished, how and to what extent?
 - How many employers so prosecuted? How many punished, how and to what extent?
- It will be years before we have satisfactory figures with which to answer all these questions. In fact, some will probably never be answered unless the proposed children's bureau bill is enacted.

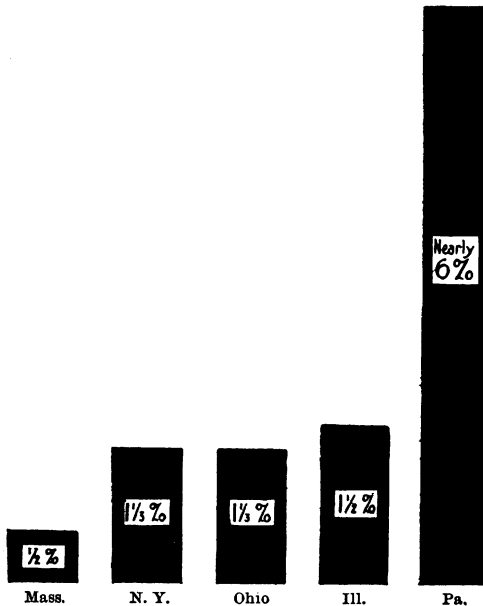
United States Census

Our most valuable and most complete source of information is, of course, the United States census. But this is taken completely but once in ten years, the mid-decade census being limited to factories. Moreover, the statistics of the mid-decade manufacturing census as to ages of children employed are very unreliable in states where parents' affidavits are accepted as proof of age, or where the factory inspectors are not honest or efficient. The great value of the general population census is, however, all too little appreciated, probably because the 1900 detailed figures were seven years late in being

published. I believe this conference might quite properly go on record declaring that the interests of the children of our country demand that such figures as these, when gathered this coming summer, be given to the public as quickly as possible after the census year, and not postponed, as was done with the 1900 figures, until after a series of special censuses has been taken, compiled and published.

The population census is superior to the census of manufac-

**TWELVE-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN REPORTED BY THEIR PARENTS TO BE
AT WORK WHEN THE CENSUS OF 1900 WAS TAKEN**



tures for child labor purposes, because its figures record the truth, in most cases, as to children's ages, and so reveal how much our child labor and compulsory education laws have been evaded.

The census taker, in the course of his rounds, sits down—usually with the mother—and records the ages of all members of the family, from the grandparents down. Comparatively few parents remember, when they give these ages, to be consistent with

the false ages they gave when they put their boys and girls to work, and these figures are therefore fairly close to the facts. A diagram recently published by the Pennsylvania Association shows the rank of our five chief manufacturing states in 1900 according to this testimony of the parents. Massachusetts stood first with but one-half of 1 per cent. of its 12-year-old children evading the law, while in Pennsylvania, through their parents' perjury, or through the connivance or laxity of inspectors or truant officers, 7064, or nearly 6 per cent., of all 12-year-old children, were illegally at work in factories, stores, offices, mines or breakers.

The population census, moreover, tells us for cities no larger than Utica, Troy or Peoria, just how many boys and how many girls were at work in each form of industry, thus including domestic servants, office boys, etc., usually not recorded in factory inspectors' statistics. It shows us also whether these are native or foreign children, and whether they are white or colored.

But because of the infrequency of the federal census, it is to the state reports that we must usually look for our figures. Here we are met, in several important states, with an unfortunate division of the field—two or three different state departments, each gathering and publishing a portion of the figures we need—the chief inspectors of factories, the chief inspectors of mines and the bureaus of industrial statistics.

State Reports

The inadequacy of most factory inspectors' reports was pointed out in a paper read at the Child Labor Conference a year ago by Commissioner John Williams, of New York state. The writer can say what Mr. Williams' modesty forbade, *i. e.*, that the figures his bureau publishes leave very little to be desired.

The fundamental figures which all factory inspectors' reports should be induced at once to show are not numerous. They relate to the number of men, women, boys and girls employed, the places, industries and hours of employment, violations discovered, prosecutions instituted, with their results, and the accidents which befall adults and children.

The only difficulty involved in gathering and classifying such statistics is presented by the industry classification. This is also the most important point of all. Almost all our state labor laws

are different in scope, some being limited to factories, while others include one or more of the following: Stores, offices, messenger service, etc. It is thus impossible to compare the figures of one state with those of another unless the various industries in each state are shown separately.

The classifications used must also be uniform, which adds to the difficulty, for uniformity can be gotten only by joint action on the part of various state bureaus. It is the writer's opinion that this conference may quite properly take the first step looking toward such joint action. It is suggested that a committee be appointed to communicate with the president of the International Association of Factory Inspectors and the president of the Association of Bureaus of Statistics, asking if they will appoint representatives of their associations to confer jointly with a committee appointed by this conference as to the possibility of greater uniformity in published statistics. It is probable that such a joint committee could secure the presentation of papers embodying its conclusions to the conventions of these associations next summer. If the committee's recommendations were ratified by these conventions, it should not require a great deal of urging by local committees to secure their adoption in the various states.

Employment Certificates Issued

Two other of the questions listed above may be referred to to-day—the statistics of employment certificates issued, and the statistics which record the enforcement of the compulsory education law. The former extremely important figures are very generally lacking, even Massachusetts, the leader in so many good things, telling us nothing as to this. The difficulty is that the issuance of employment certificates is usually in the hands of school officials, often without any legal requirement that records shall be kept; with the result that very imperfect records, if any, are kept by local officials, and probably none are published unless the state department of education requires such figures to be reported to it for insertion in the state report. All state departments of education should have the importance of requiring such statistics presented to them by representatives of the various state child labor committees. In Pennsylvania recently, quite without legal enactment on this point, our state superintendent has required a stub record of certificates

issued, and has instructed local officials to record also on these stubs the kind of proof of age they accept in regard to each child. It is hoped that next year figures covering these points will be collected and published by the state department. If this is done, Pennsylvania will have the honor of being the only state to make public record of the number of its children who start each year to work, and of the proof on which it relies in its belief that these children are really over 14 years of age.

Proof of Age

There is hardly a more difficult question in our whole field of work than this one—proof of age. New York City has demonstrated the possibility of getting reliable records of age without using even the school record. The New York law does not allow an affidavit in any case. A folder published by the National Committee, entitled "Proof of Age," shows that for one recent year only 2 per cent. out of 22,423 applicants were unable to bring an acceptable record of their age. The law provides that in such cases age may be settled by the certificates of two out of three physicians, who quite separately give the applicants a physical examination. This possibility of getting real records of age is a fact which few appreciate. Many officials who issue certificates refuse to believe that such a thing is even approximately possible in their communities. As a result, certificates are frequently issued to children on the basis of a mere pencil entry on a teacher's enrollment book, an entry which probably shows only how many years old the child was on a certain date (months being neglected), and thus may be as much as eleven months out of the way; an entry, furthermore, frequently made merely on the basis of what the child states to its new teacher as its age at the first of each school year, without comparison having been made with the age recorded a year before to see if a year has not been purposely skipped. Or, worst of all, it may be that the certificate is issued on the basis of a parent's affidavit. Unless some interested persons follow up this work, the ordinary official who issues certificates will quickly slip into the habit of accepting the parent's claim that a birth or baptismal certificate or similar record cannot be procured, and will issue practically all the certificates on the basis of either school

records or affidavits. Miss Ward's paper ¹ will show how this has happened in the city of Boston, in plain violation of the law. If the ages of children, as recorded on the school books in Boston are, as they are now getting to be in New York, a permanent record, showing the exact date of birth, and if this record is itself based on birth certificates, baptismal certificates or other records presented when the children first entered school, the let-down in the law has of course been negligible. But it is easy to believe that no such careful school records of age exist in schools located in the small industrial villages in Massachusetts, and if the same methods of issuing certificates have been followed in such places, there must have been evasions of the law. But it is impossible to know what is being done, for no statistics are published. Miss Ward's figures meant weeks of research and tabulation. Here is another problem for state committees to grapple with.

The difficulty of proving age will be reduced to its lowest terms when the same efforts are made in this country to compel the recording of births as is customary in Europe. We are still far from that ideal.

Compulsory Education Statistics

In conclusion, let me speak of the compulsory education laws and the general subject of school statistics. These laws, in my opinion, are far above all child labor laws as a protection to children. The schools have the children in their grasp. They can, if they will, make sure of their ages. It is simply a problem of holding them. Factory inspectors must find the children, and those who do not want to be found usually are not found. But whether our schools are holding their children up to the legal age is something on which school statistics are practically silent. The treasurer of a corporation whose cash account failed to show how much was received during the year and how much was spent, would be instantly discharged. If his defense was merely this, that he showed how much was on hand at the close of last year and how much again at the close of this year, he would be a candidate for custodial care. But this is what practically all the treasurers of our children—our school superintendents—are doing. They tell us merely the number of children enrolled at the ends of successive

¹ Miss Ward's paper was not submitted for publication.

school years. What they should tell the public, as trustees of its children, and with a responsibility under the compulsory education law, is

(1) How many children, 8-16, were enrolled in the public, private and parochial schools of the city at the end of last year.

(2) How many new ones of these ages were added during this year (either by entering the schools or by arriving at the age of eight).

The total of these groups represents the school's receipts—to be accounted for thus:

(1) How many children, 8-16, were excused from further attendance on the following grounds:

- a. Reached the age of 16.
- b. Reached the age of 14 and began to work legally.
- c. Moved out of the city.
- d. Left school because physically or mentally unable to attend longer.
- e. Left school to be instructed privately.
- f. Died during the year.

(2) How many children, 8-16, are still enrolled at the end of the year.

The total of these two classes, when compared with the two preceding, should show all present or accounted for. No school report, to my knowledge, pretends to offer such a compulsory education cash account as this. Parochial schools are usually neglected altogether, the fact being overlooked that, in enforcing compulsory education, boards of public education have in most states explicit authority over parochial schools given to them by the legislature.

Age and Grade Statistics

Without waiting for the ideal figures just outlined, a great deal can be accomplished if school officials can be persuaded to count their children of each age and publish their figures. If these can be made to include parochial school and other private school children, and if they show a considerably smaller number successively in the 10, 11 and 12-year-old groups, something must be wrong. Of course it is normal in any community for the number of children of lower ages to exceed somewhat those of higher ages. But it can easily be shown from census figures that this variation

is not great—the difference between the 12-year-olds and the 13-year-olds, for example, varying between 1 per cent. and 5 per cent. in our chief manufacturing states.¹ In contrast to this, Mr. Ayres,² from his study of 58 cities, concludes that 10 per cent. leave school by the time they are 13 years old. Dr. Thorndike,³ in a study of 25 cities, concludes that “of 100 in school at the age of 8 years, nine leave while only 12 years old, and 18 while 13 years old.” City school reports are increasingly publishing “age and grade” tables of the kind used by these writers, and these, with proper allowance for children transferred to parochial schools, can readily be used in order to learn if the compulsory education law is really being enforced.

School Census

There is one other statistical record—the school census—which is fundamental to a proper enforcement of the compulsory education law. If this is a real census, it will disclose a number of children who ought to be in school, but are not, chiefly those who have escaped the truant officers in some way during the year, but also a considerable number of children who have moved into the city from elsewhere, or who have just reached the compulsory age—usually 8 years. But if the school census is a farce, its absurdity will be revealed by the fact that the total number of children it records as living in the city will be less than the number reported by the superintendent as enrolled in the schools.

Almost every compulsory education law calls for a school census, and it is chiefly because practically no states, and very few cities, publish the results of their censuses, that their ordinary worthlessness is not apparent. Miss Ward's test in Massachusetts

¹Unfortunately, the United States Census does not show these figures for cities. For the five chief manufacturing states the figures were as follows in 1900 (Census of 1900, Vol. II, Table 2).

	12-year old children.	13-year old children.	Per cent of decrease.
New York	128,640	122,528	4.7
Pennsylvania	123,420	121,897	1.2
Illinois	98,553	94,067	4.5
Ohio	81,638	81,053	.7
Massachusetts	45,695	44,333	2.9

²“Laggards in Our Schools,” by Leonard P. Ayres, page 28.

³“The Elimination of Pupils from School,” by Edward L. Thorndike (U. S. Education Bul. No. 379, page 27).

had to be based on unpublished figures. Illustrations of the same sort could also be multiplied by the writer from figures gathered by means of a schedule privately sent to all Pennsylvania superintendents. Full school census figures ought to appear in every school report. When they begin to show an excess over the school enrollment, school officers should be asked to account for that excess—the number not in any school—to show how many of these were exempt because they were feeble-minded or privately tutored, and how many were actually placed in some school. Mr. Whittemore will tell of some of the methods he has employed to make his school census one of the few which, in my opinion, fulfills the purpose of the law.

Statistics must be handled with great care. This is as true of child labor statistics as of any other. One may easily blunder in using them and be subjected to criticism for attempting to exaggerate conditions. I think I am justified in saying that the secretaries of the National Committee stand ready at any time to advise, as far as they can, with any who are attempting, for the first time in their own localities, to make use of figures which their local or state officials have gathered.